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The Humane Society of the United States

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## HSUS Investigates: New York Puppy Stores

November 2011

### Summary

In response to concerns about the sources of puppies in New York pet stores, The HSUS's Investigations unit conducted a hidden-camera investigation of 11 New York pet stores, visited many of their puppy suppliers, and studied interstate puppy shipping documents for more than 100 New York pet stores in all. Our investigation concluded that, regardless of what pet stores' sales staff tell shoppers about their puppy sources, all of the stores investigated were buying from inhumane mass-breeding facilities known as puppy mills -- including some of the worst known puppy mills in Missouri and other top puppy mill states.

All 11 stores The HSUS visited in person had obtained puppies through large-scale commercial breeders, even though most of the stores' websites or sales staff claimed they obtained puppies from "private" breeders, or said that puppies were kept in breeders' "own homes or in climate-controlled kennels with plenty of provision for fresh-air exercise." Although the salespeople's statements implied that they purchased from small-scale breeders, when HSUS investigators visited a number of the stores' sources in the Midwest, they found suppliers with hundreds of dogs confined to small cages. Many of these facilities were linked to serious federal Animal Welfare Act violations for issues such as sick and injured dogs who hadn't been treated by a vet, dogs without safe or adequate shelter, and dogs without adequate protection from extreme heat and cold.

Two of the pet stores investigators visited in person and seven of the stores studied through transport records were found purchasing from a facility owned by Brandi Cheney, identified last year by The HSUS as one of the worst puppy mill operators in Missouri. Cheney has been linked to two different puppy mills, which collectively



Although pet stores in NY claimed to get puppies only from "private breeders," our investigation found that many of their puppies come from large commercial puppy mills like this one. HSUS/2011

have amassed more than 500 pages of Animal Welfare Act violations and enforcement records. This year, Cheney's newest facility, Circle B Farms in Huntsville, Mo., has accumulated state and federal animal welfare violations that include: a heat index of 116° F inside one of the kennel buildings, with dogs "panting at a rapid/steady rate," a poodle with a swollen foot who could not bear weight on it, a cock-a-poo with hair so badly matted that it was pulling on her skin, and dogs obtained by the kennel without any proof of rabies vaccination.

**Pet stores that purchased puppies from Brandi Cheney include: American Dog Club, Critter Comforts, Happy Tails, Pet Palace, Raising Rover & Baby, Tea Cup Pup, and Yipity Yap.**

Some of the stores investigated through shipping documents (but none of the stores that were visited in person) were even found purchasing from Kathy Jo Bauck, also known as Kathy Cole of New York Mills, Minn., a convicted animal abuser. Bauck is one of the most notorious puppy mill operators in the country. Her license was permanently revoked by the USDA after she accumulated numerous pages of severe Animal Welfare Act violations for issues such as injured dogs with open and bleeding wounds who had not been treated by a vet, piles of accumulated feces, dogs with their fur smeared with feces, and puppies found shivering in the cold in temperatures as low as 12° F.

In addition, Bauck/ Cole was ordered to stop performing her own surgeries on dogs without a veterinary license in 2006, and was convicted of animal cruelty and torture in 2009. **Pet stores that purchased puppies from Kathy Bauck/ Kathy Cole include the New York Kennel Club (also known as Island Puppies) and Zoo-Rama Pets and Aquarium. We also found an online retailer (Your Puppy Love) and businesses called Puppy Harmony and Canine Culture Center each purchasing dozens of puppies from Bauck/Cole.** The sellers purchased puppies from this unlicensed, convicted animal abuser between June and August of this year.

**By the numbers:**

- **11 = New York City pet stores visited in person with hidden camera.** Undercover investigators asked typical consumer questions about the sources of puppies and received misleading replies. The first investigation was performed in June 2011 by an HSUS investigator, along with actor/ advocate Lorenzo Borghese. The second part of the investigation was filmed in August 2011 by HSUS investigators after interstate transport documents had been received and reviewed.
- **100+ = Number of NY puppy stores studied** through interstate shipping documents that were found buying from large-scale commercial breeders in some of the top puppy mill states (Ark., Iowa, Kan., Okla., Minn., and Mo.).
- **1,300 = Shipments of puppies to NY pet stores studied** by The HSUS in a four-month period in 2011.
- **4,500 = Individual puppies shipped to NY pet stores from a sampling of top puppy mill states** during a four-month period.

### Stores visited with undercover camera:

1. **American Kennels**, 798 Lexington Ave. – refused to give breeder info; linked to puppy sources with problematic USDA reports, including Ruth Zuspann/ Zuspann’s Kennel in MO (see HSUS’s Dirty Dozen report update). <http://www.americkennels.com/>
2. **Le Petit Puppy**, 18 Christopher St. – gave one breeder name; linked to suppliers with problematic USDA reports. <http://lepetitpuppynyc.com/>
3. **Citipups**, 45 Christopher St. – gave breeder names and falsely stated that puppy miller/broker Sandra Blake has “wide-open spaces” for her dogs. Linked to puppy sources with problematic USDA reports, including Ruth Zuspann/ Zuspann’s Kennel in MO (see HSUS’s Dirty Dozen report update). <http://www.citipups.com/> .
4. **Metro Puppy**, 103-23 Metropolitan Ave., Forest Hills – owner told the “shopper” that “legislation shut all that [puppy mills] down long ago.” [no website]
5. **Raising Rover & Baby**, 1428 Lexington Ave. – avoided questions about breeders; review of health certificates and USDA reports show they use some of the worst puppy mills, including Brandi Cheney. <http://www.raisingroverltd.com/>. Reportedly under new ownership since June 2011.
6. **Pets on Lex**, 1109 Lexington Ave. – info on breeders obtained from health certificates; bad USDA reports. <http://petsonlex.com/>
7. **Puppy City**, 2539 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn – info on one breeder obtained from salesman; bad USDA reports on suppliers (see Lone Sycamore Kennels and others). <http://www.puppycityny.com/>
8. **Puppy Petite** (formerly Puppy Boutique), 8002 17<sup>th</sup> Ave., Brooklyn – gave one breeder name – “It’s not a puppy mill or anything like that – we only work with private breeders;” linked to MO broker that buys from numerous kennels with bad USDA reports. <http://www.puppypetite.com/>
9. **Yipity Yap**, 1802 East Jericho Turnpike, Huntington, N.Y., L.I. – refused to give breeder info – “I have nothing to hide,” said the salesman three times as he refused to give breeder info; the store has purchased more than a dozen puppies from Brandi Cheney this year. [www.yipityyap.com](http://www.yipityyap.com)
10. **Vanity Pups**, 38-13 Bell Blvd., Bayside, N.Y. – gave one breeder name after telling the “shopper” that the humane society tells everyone that all puppies are from mills because “they want the money.” Bad USDA reports for suppliers, one of which is Lourance in Oklahoma, who has some of the worst USDA reports The HSUS has seen. [www.vanitypups.com](http://www.vanitypups.com)
11. **A World of Pups**, 540 86<sup>th</sup> St., Brooklyn – The HSUS has received more consumer complaints about sick puppies purchased from this store than any of the stores investigated; problematic USDA reports for many of the puppy mills it uses. [www.awop.com](http://www.awop.com)

### Conclusion

All of the stores The HSUS visited in person, and many of 100 stores studied through the use of transport documents, were found to be purchasing from commercial puppy producers with known Animal Welfare Act violations, including some with citations for filthy conditions, lack of adequate space, underweight animals, dogs found in the extreme cold or heat without adequate weather protection, or sick or injured dogs in need of veterinary care.

This report proves once again that claims made by pet stores’ websites and sales people about their puppy sources cannot be taken at face value. The HSUS recommends that members of the public who wish to acquire a puppy adopt from an animal shelter or a respected breed-rescue group instead of purchasing from a pet

store. If choosing to buy instead of to adopt, purchase only from a responsible breeder and make sure to personally visit the facility where the puppy was born and raised.

For more on this story, see our video at [www.humanesociety.org](http://www.humanesociety.org). For more information on puppy mills, go to [www.humanesociety.org/puppymills](http://www.humanesociety.org/puppymills).

For information on getting a puppy from a humane source, please visit [www.humanesociety.org/puppy](http://www.humanesociety.org/puppy).